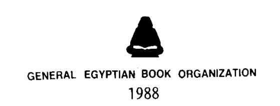
FAROUQ GUWAIDAH

THE FALL OF CORDOVA

(A VIZIER IN LOVE)

Translated from Arabic
By
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with an introduction by
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Introduction

In this issue of Contemporary Arabic Literature, Dr. Enani offers the reader one of the popular smash-hits of the contemporary Egyptian theatre which is, curiously, a poetic drama. *The Fall of Cordova* is written in the free verse mode initiated in the 60's by Salah Abdul Saboor and other pioneers of the New Movement[1]. Its style, however, retains certain aspects of the traditional Arabic poem and, at times, captures something of its flavour. Indeed, its author, Mr. Farouk Guwaida occupies a somewhat singular position among the poets of the second generation of the New Verse Movement. Not only has he managed to escape the influence of the overpowering tonalities, imagery patterns, heavily allusive diction and bawdy-mystical streak typical of the Abdul-Saboor poem, and develop a distinct individual voice, but he also often experiments with the traditional

(1) See M. M. Enani's Introduction to his *Anthology of the New Arabic Poetry in Egypt*, Contemporary Arabic Literature Series, No. 3, State Publishing House, Cairo, 1986; and Nehad Selaiha's Introduction to her translation of Salah Abdul Saboor's play *Now the King is Dead*, Contemporary Arabic Literature Series, No. 4, State Publishing House, Cairo, 1986.

metrical forms and rhyme patterns to produce quasi-classical pieces that preserve the clarity, logical simplicity and pronounced musicality of the old poem, and yet have nothing of its amorphous quality or diffuseness. In such poems as *To the Nile,* for instance, which he modelled on a poem by Abul Tayyib Al-Mutanabbi written in the ninth century A.D., Guwaida manipulates the rigid regularity of the rhythmical form to develop a taut metaphorical scheme, and uses humorous and serious words alternately in the rhyming line endings to create a cumulative ironical effect. The result is a poem that combines the form and spirit of the classical satire as well as the sophisticated ironical tone, and organic structure of modern poetry.

Mr. Guwaida's early poetry was uniformly lyrical in the high romantic tradition and dealt mostly with the themes of love, departure, the vague longings of youth, the agonies of desertion and so on. This, together with the simplicity of his diction and the metres he chose guaranteed his accessibility at a time when poetry was increasingly becoming something of a puzzle to the ordinary reader. He won a wide readership at once, particularly among the young, and his popularity has persisted even though his style has changed.

As early as his second collection of poetry, *Love will Survive,* also written in his twenties, one detects a new tone of philosophical sobriety creeping into the poetry and tinging the sweet romantic sadness. What is more, the poetry begins conspicuously to relate to the contemporary political scene so that the existential suffering of the poet is located in a particular concrete reality and acquires a justification, or in the Wordsworthian fashion, a local habitation and a name. In poems like *When the Man Dies in*

Us, or *Sad Times*, or *When Wolves Reign*, Guwaida relates his spiritual ennui to the political turmoil, contradictions and uncertainities which have characterized recent Egyptian history since the 1952 revolution. Having trained as a journalist and worked for a number of years in the Economic Section of the national newspaper Al-Ahram (where he now heads the cultural section), Mr. Guwaida could not well have kept politics and economics out of his poetry. In the six collections that followed - *The Longing Returns, Your Eyes, My Home, Forever in My Heart, Because I love You, Something to Survive,* and *I Had the Heart to Forget* - love and politics are almost inseparable, and their interaction gives the poetry a sense of urgency and a palpable dramatic quality. In these collections too, Guwaida extended his technical scope and tried his hand, with successful results, at various forms: at the symbolic poem, as in *The Return of the Prophets* and other pieces for instance; at the narrative allegorical form (in a series of related poems entitled *After the Departure of the Sun)*, at the expressionistic poem, as in *The Features of an Old Face Lost*; and at political satire (as in *To a River Tamed*). In this latter form he revealed a hitherto hidden sense of humour and a capacity for scathing irony.

The poem form, however, despite all these experiments, could not fully accommodate Guwaida's growing poetic interests and concerns. He, therefore, turned to drama and wrote *A Vizier in Love* or, as Dr. Enani renamed it, *The Fall of Cordova*. It was performed in Cairo in the winter season of 1984-85 and took the theatrical scene quite by storm. Its success was repeated when it toured other Arab countries, and it represented Egypt at several Arab Theatre Festivals.

Guwaida took his material for *The Fall of Gordova* from the history of al-Andalus, the name given by the Arab Muslims to the Iberian Peninsula after its occupation in the 8th century. His dramatic handling of this material, however, is extremely novel and interesting. The dramatic time-frame of the play which begins with Ibn Zaydoun's viziership and ends with his death could not reasonably encompass more than fifty years. Historically speaking, however, the play begins in the early 11th century, after the breakup of the unified Muslim State (established by the Umayyad Abdul Rahman I in 765), and the disintegration of the Caliphate (declared by Abdul Rahman III in 929), and the beginning of the period of the petty Muslim kingdoms of Spain *(taifas)*. As the play proceeds, actual historical time is speedily contracted, and nearly two hundred years are compressed into fifty, so that the play ends in the 13th century with the fall of Cordova to the Castillian king Ferdinand III in 1236.

This curious handling of time, in which Guwaida follows the example of Shakespeare in *Othello*, produces two conflicting time scales with interesting dramatic results: as the historical gets constantly negated by the imaginative 'representational time', a new temporal mode emerges, a kind of 'non-time' dimension which allows the co-occurrence of all sorts of characters and events which could not possibly have existed at the same time, and, which is more important for the purposes of the author, makes it both easy and natural for the audience to identify the past historical scene with the present-day realities of the Arab world, to be at once in the present and in the past, and to relive the loss of Palestine in mourning the fall of Cordova.

In view of the temporal scheme of the play one can easily

accept, and, indeed, dramatically justify what some have called inaccuracies, castigated as pure invention, and condemned as anachronisms. In his treatment of space, Guwaida follows a similar practice: literal space, i.e., the definite identity of places, is negated by representational space, i.e., the unchanging scene on the stage. In Part I, scene III, for instance, the stage encompasses Ibn Zaydoun's home, the court of the first king, the court of the Second King, and the routes connecting them all. It takes Ibn Zaydoun only a few steps on the stage to move imaginatively from one place to another, and the time compression is matched by the compression of space. And just as the conflict of literal and representational time produces the play's symbolic temporal mode, or 'non-time', the merging of literal into representational space creates a symbolic 'non-space' into which all places merge into the identity of the sacred homeland.

This sacred homeland is symbolically embodied in the heroine, Walladah, who also stands for faith, loyalty, unity, true consciousness, and all the positive values in the life of a nation. Unlike her historical counterpart, she remains loyal to Ibn Zaydoun throughout and until his death. The real, historical Walladah, the daughter of the last Umayyad Caliph of Andalusia, al-Mustakfi, was a pleasure-loving princess, fond of poetry and men, and had no interest in politics whatsover. Moreover, her relationship with Ibn Zaydoun lasted only for two years after which she deserted him for another, a rival statesman (Rabi' in the play), with whom she lived for a great number of years - in fact, until her death. The Walladah of the play, however, is not a mere abstraction; she is invested with a few naturalistic details which render her quite convincing, and rather moving as a character at times. In scene IV of Part I, for example, she functions as a sym-

bol until near the end of the scene when she suddenly springs to life as a character and touchingly asks, having failed to persuade her lover to work with the people rather than the rulers, and to give up the corrupt game of power:

Would you still have me without a throne?

And when he hesitates she convincingly exclaims, quite at home in the western naturalistic tradition:

Oh don't answer! Say nothing!
I know enough already!

and exits.

The symbolical treatment of time, place and character, and the few naturalistic details here and there do not however fully explain the technique pursued in the play or its dramatic formula since Ibn Zaydoun, the hero of the play, is presented to us as a full-fledged tragic hero in the tradition of classical tragedy. As such, he is the centre of all action, the person around whose decisions and moves everything pivots. He is also suitably furnished with the all hallowed Aristotelian tragic flaw: he believes that real power lies with the establishment rather than with the people, and, therefore, refuses to listen to Walladah who warns him, and chooses to work with the corrupt rulers of the Islamic World (who are satirically modelled on presest-day rulers). In doing this he betrays at once his nation and his faith and pays for his guilt with his life.

As a tragic hero, Guwaida's Ibn Zaydoun (who, unlike the real historical one who went to prison twice for short periods, spends most of his life in prison) often assumes an oratorical mode of speech. However, the tone of lament and exhortation he frequently adopts, and his elegiac mood which establishes itself

early on in the play and implies a frontal, demonstrative mode of acting in which the actor addresses the audience rather than the actors around him on the stage—this elegiac mood and exhortatory lamentatory mode cannot be fully explained or justified in terms of classical tragedy or, indeed, Brecht's epic theatre (which the play superficially resembles in certain aspects), let alone the naturalistic tradition. The play points, in fact in another direction, to a different, though equally old, theatrical tradition—namely, the Iranian Ta'ziyeh. The Ta'ziyeh is at once a folk opera and a confessional, expiatory ritual performed yearly in the Muslim month of Muharram to commemorate the martyrdom on the plain of Kerbela in 680 A.D. of the Prophet's grandson, al-Hussein, following his betrayal by the people of Kufa in Iraq (who had summoned him and promised him support against his political rival, the Sunnite Claiph, Yazid).

The Ta'ziyeh was once described as the 'indigenous avant-garde theatre of Iran which holds the promise of stimulating new theatrical ideas and experiments'[2]. *The Fall of Cordova*, in my view, can be read as one such experiment. In it, as in the Ta'ziyeh, time and place are universalized, and dialogue functions not so much as a device to convey or develop the plot (which is flimsy and well-known beforehand) but as a means of reinforcing a particular religious and ideological order, and investing political action with religious ardour.

Political events in *The Fall of Cordova* carry strong religious implications: the power-struggle among the kings is seen not just

(2) See Peter J. Chelkowski, "Ta'ziyeh: Indigenous Avant-Garde Theatre of Iran", in *Ta'ziyeh; Ritual and Drama in Iran*, edited by Peter Chelkowski, New York University, 1979, p. 11.

as a threat to the bodypolitic, but as a threat to the faith itself, and the fall of the city is presented as the fall of Islam, of the city of God. In this mood the distant historical event is received and re-lived, and the performance acquires something of the spirit of a confessional ritual.

Guilt, martyrdom, and lamentation, the three cornerstones of the Ta'ziyeh ritual, figure prominently in Guwaida's play; they are summed up and implied in the word 'loss' which occurs quite frequently, and explode with a tremendous crash in the chorus of the final scene:

> O Messenger of Allah!
> My tears flow whenever I direct my face
> Towards your exalted Qiblah!
> The guilt I carry around my neck
> Is unbearable;...
> Oh Messenger of Allah!
> I am crying today
> When it is too late to cry!
> What boots it if my tears flow,
> Now that the people are beginning to go
> Deserting their glory and great homeland?
> The Minarets of Islam are silent,
> Lost in sad perplexity;
> While the streets of Cordova
> Are belching the Frankish army;
> The prayers in our minarets are silent,
> Will no one cry:
> Allah is Great?
> Will that call die
> On people's lips?

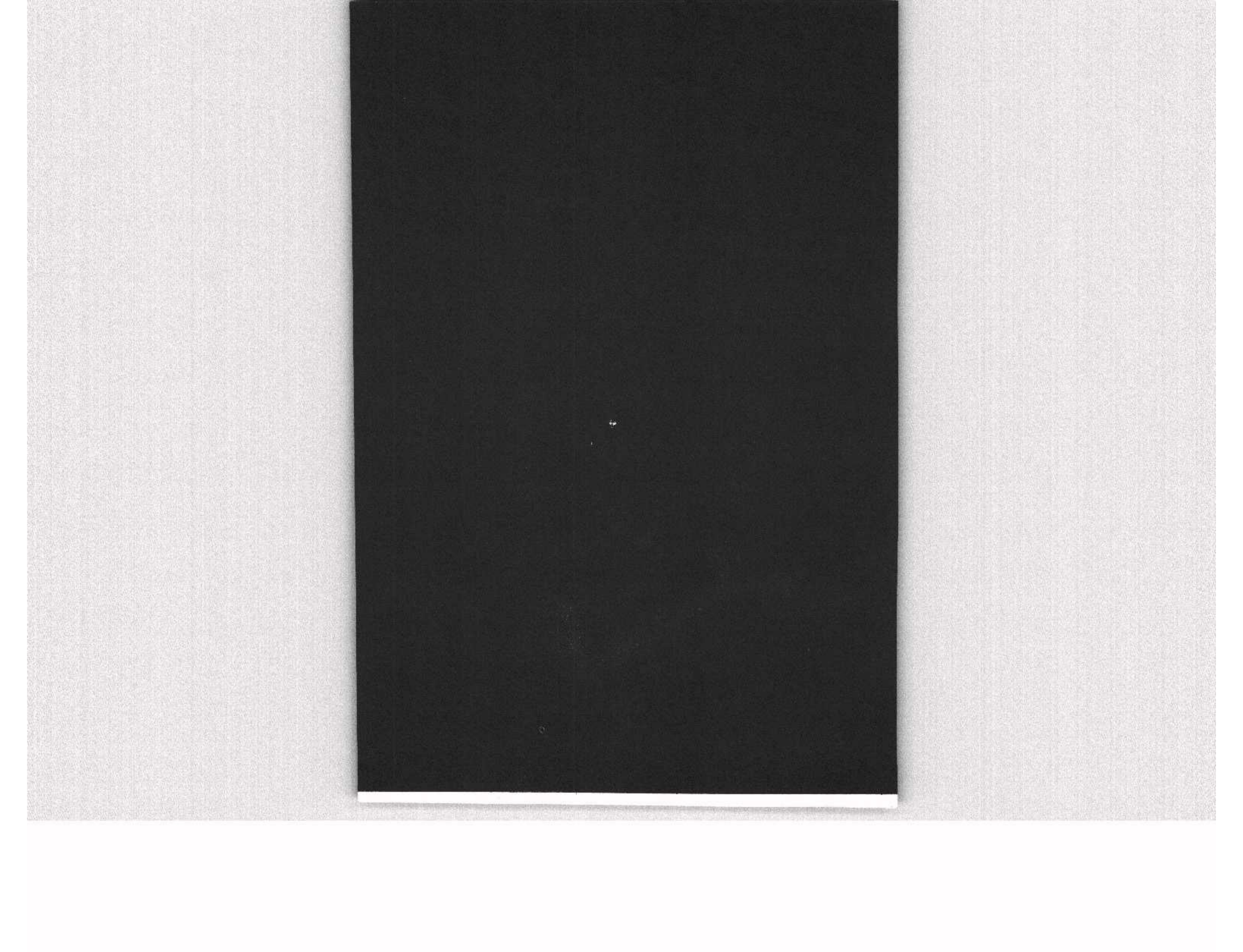
The novelty of Guwaida's play, its significant dramatic contribution, and the secret of its astonishing success and emotional impact lie exactly in this: that it used the episodic form, political orientation, and demonstrative style characteristic of the Brechtian epic theatre but in the mood of an oratorio, and created a type of confessional, cathartic performance in which historical events are translated into spiritual ones.

In his translation, Professor Enani has tried, with success, to be faithful to the Arabic text, and to reproduce not only the prose meaning of the lines but also their full poetic effect. He has maintained the easy flow of the verse, being a dramatic poet in his own right, in rhythms that are as close as possible to the original, notwithstanding the basic differences betwen the two languages. His expert knowledge of poetry, and his interest in Guwaida's work have combined to produce a smooth English text that Guwaida might have written if English had been his mother tongue.

Nehad Selaiha
Cairo, 1987




THE FALL OF CORDOVA



PART I

SCENE I

(Historian and narrator Abu Hayyan stands on one side of the stage, with a direct spotlight on him).

Abu Hayyan : A thousand year ago, or more,
A civilization flourished here —
The glory of a people who knew
What they wanted.
And here in Andalusia
The muezzin called people to prayer:

Chorus : Allah is Great, Allah is Great!
Abu Hayyan : A thousand years ago, or more,
The houses of God rejoiced in prayer:

: Allah is Great, Allah is Great!

Abu Hayyan : Wherever the sword of Tarek fell,
The world felt the blow and trembled,
And Time itself surrendered!
All that remains today is memory:
The citadels are down and the kingdoms are clay,
And the memory, now reviving,
Breeds but sorrow—a wound bleeding.
For, in a myriad mazes of malice,
And in barren despair,
Mighty monarchs fell,
And a country was lost,
That was Andalusia.
And it was in Andalusia
That Ibn Zaydoun sang;
In Cordova he sang
A true love song in earnest —
The Grand Vizier Ibn Zaydoun!
He travelled from State to State
Carrying a dream,
The harbinger of a dawn of happiness.
And on the green hills of Cordova
He heard his Walladah sing back —
The descendent of a Royal House
And glory old.
"Oh, but he lost his way", they said,
"For a poet should confine himself to words,
"A poet's natural sword".
Well, a poet could, couldn't he,
Re-create the times, nurture the dream
Of purity and faith, even by

Turning himself into a dream
Threading the whole nation!
"Ah, but", they said, "he thought
"Power was the law of life,
"That the edge of the sword
"Could put right a time awry,
"And he chose the way of power,
"An actual sword to carry,
"And became a vizier!"

Ziyad : *(In heraldic tones)*
Grand Vizier, Abul-Waleed Ibn Zaydoun!
(Enter Vizier Ibn Zaydoun, with followers. This is his installation celebration; some poets are there to mark the occasion).

Ibn Kaab : Oh, shouldn't the government today rejoice,
Now that you've come to be the choice?

Ibn Zaydoun : *(apparently disgusted with the ridiculous couplet)*
Thank you, Ibn Kaab!

Ibn Salem : Although your poetry had won us, heart and soul,
We won you for power, truly, one and all!

Ibn Zaydoun : I certainly hope that God will direct
Me to help my people.

Ibn Al-Mu'tamad: O Vizier of glory and of honour,
Of origin noble, lineally pure,
Your qualities outshine all power,
And will raise the Arabs higher!

Ibn Zaydoun : Thank you comrades *(impatient for the line of flatterers to end)* Where is Hamdous?

Hamdous : Present, my lord! Here is my couplet:
You're the Vizier whom poetry elevates,
Over Kings and Monarchs and potentates!
(Ibn Al-Mu'tamad says aside to Hamdous: Don't overdo it,
you fool! The King will be jealous and kill you!)

Ibn Salem : O garden of verse how humble I feel,
Your power so great my lips does seal;
The Government is fortunate to have you soon,
For if it be the sun, you are the moon
(Enter Rabi, one of the King's ministers and a poet. He approaches Ibn Zaydoun and announces his presence)

Rabi : I've come to congratulate you
On being appointed Grand Vizier;
To the highest post you're not new,
The Crown of poets, though few!

Hamdous : *(in appallingly ridiculous tones, as though carried away by his hypocritical passion)*
To give you your due, in praise and eulogy,
I should tell Time: abandon chronology!

Ibn Zaydoun : *(Having had enough)* Thank you, thank you all!
I hope that God will grant our wishes,
And that Arab glory will shine again.

Rabi : *(In obviously envious tones)*
But you can do it, poet of poets!

For, though unacknowledged,
Another 'Power' is yours!
You have, haven't you, won Walladah's heart,
The sweetest girl in Cordova?

Ibn Zaydoun : *(ignoring the remark, calls on a singer)*
Where is Rabab, my songstress?
Ah, here she is! Rabab! Do you remember
The last lyric I composed? *(Rabab nods)*

Rabab : *(singing)*
O time of joy,
Withhold no pleasure;
Pour forth a tune,
To dance in the air!
Not knowing why,
We come to the world,
To depart so soon,
Not knowing where!
O time of joy,
Pour in good measure,
The tune so fair!

O time of joy, do sing a song,
To weave some dream into reality;
From dream to dream take us along,
From love to love, into eternity;
If time is true, how can we grumble,
If false we scoff at its enmity;
We're made for love, on love we live;
In love there's no impossibility!

Ibn Zaydoun : *(Bidding his guests farewell, he takes Abu Hayyan to one side of the stage and whispers to him)*
Could you see the roots of a people's tragedy?
All rulers like to hear this eulogy,
And the people are used to this hypocrisy.

Abu Hayyan : In hypocrisy alone,
Are the seeds of tragedy sown

BLACKOUT

SCENE II

(Ibn Zaydoun's house. Walladah enters. A former queen of Andalusia, she is preceded by Ziyad who announces her arrvial as the 'Princess of Cordova')

Walladah : I had to wait until the flatterers have left.

Ibn Zaydoun : I care for none but you!
You're my very life, Walladah.

Walladah : 'Tis said you're too liberal with words,
In verse and prose,
Enamoured of every human flower,
Jasmine, basil and rose!
In every face you follow a dream,
And launch your heart in every stream!

Ibn Zaydoun : If indeed I had known women,
Had fallen in love insatiably,
When your morning rose,

So pure and heavenly,
All other lights were eclipsed,
And looked so pale and earthly!

Walladah : What do you see in me?
What do you love in me?

Ibn Zaydoun : I see you in everything about me,
And love you in all I see —
A morning for ever bright,
A hope for ever white!

Walladah : Now tell me the news of the Vizier.

Ibn Zaydoun : I'm your Vizier alone,
You queen of undying rule!

Walladah : *(after a brief pause)*
I fell in love with a heart,
Not with high office!
Indeed, I fear high offices
Which come and go,
Leaving us with a memory,
Dreaming on what has been,
But can no longer be!

Ibn Zaydoun : Oh, have no fear of that!

Walladah : I have a father to mourn,
A glory and a throne,
Though I had always known
It would go as it had come.
Power corrupts and, worse still,
It causes people to miss their vocation.
I'm afraid you'll miss yours.

Ibn Zaydoun : Your eyes are lights that dazzle the morn!

Walladah : They are loving eyes.

Ibn Zaydoun : Why are those tears then?

Walladah : Fear sheds them.

Ibn Zaydoun : And the silent sorrow?

Walladah : I am afraid of old Father Time that conquers all!
My royal palace was lost in the labyrinth of time,
And the glory dearly loved is gone.
I weep both power and father,
A mighty monarch and a vast splendour,
And my mother, lost in her vernal bloom.
Today I am alone, all all alone.

Ibn Zaydoun : Surely you're not alone any more.

Walladah : Oh, you are my eternal kingdom.
If I had to choose between the kingdom
Of the earth and the light in your eyes
I would have no hesitation, but,
As I have said,
I am afraid for you!

Ibn Zaydoun : *(confidently)*
Have no fear on that score!
The king now knows I am truly worthy
To be his minister. O Walladah!
I spent a life-time in his service,
Dreaming of this moment.

Walladah : Pray do not take offence at my misgivings,

For I have a long experience behind me,
Have known how sour is power gone,
And now have none to call mine but you.
For you I fear the vicissitudes of fortune.

Ibn Zaydoun : Do not give way to fear,
We have a new office to celebrate
And a Grand Vizier to initiate!
Come, let me tell you what passed
Between me and the king.

Walladah : Rather than the king's news,
I would hear your verses;
Come, come, read me a poem or two,
For it is poetry that I care for.
You know, Waleed, what power poetry has;
You may be made king and be buried
With the world's kings and queens,
But as poet, you'll always live
A King of kings!

Ibn Zaydoun : Oh, what use is a poet's voice?
Can his words beat a brandished sword?
I hate to say it but
Sometimes you need a sword
To defend the word.

Walladah : Power is a strange wine
Whose vapours roll and
Lift us up to worlds of illusion;
It makes us think we're above all things;
And so we grow, like shadows,

Vapid and insubstantial, but bigger.
We learn to savour the taste of untruth,
To enjoy the colour of flattering words,
The falsehoods and tawdry dreams.
Justice is an incense we burn in rulers' courts.
A ruler here is above the law,
We give him protection, if a killer,
We bail him out, if a robber,
He sends people to jail,
And we're willing to act as prison bars;
He orders them to be lashed,
With us eager to be the whips!
The ruler is now both light and purity,
Radiating peace and security.
For once in office we're power-drunk;
How could we realize the meaning of
True purity and faith?
How can we distinguish right from wrong?
High office can make a giant of a midget,
Though the office itself must go
And be trampled underfoot.

Ibn Zaydoun : I can perceive no change, nor any will
To change, in you. O flight of fantasy!
You're the very dream in your head,
You're purity in times of debauchery,
The times that equate the saint with the impostor!
Now let me ask you:
If my head was severed,
Can the sound of words be of use?
Have the dead ever spoken?

Walladah : When people die erect,
Then the earth will one day beget
A dream, a measure of security
And real people.
But when people die in prostration,
Then our life will inadvertently fall
Into the gaping space between
The rulers and the guards.

Ibn Zaydoun : It's the sword that severs a poet's head.

Walladah : But he may die to keep his words alive.
High office is a disease, art the cure.
I had the disease once.
Vainglory accompanies power
And sinks with it;
Only the artist retains the glory.
Believe me,
I loved you not as power,
A crown among many,
But as poetry, art and purity.

Ibn Zaydoun : Art can die at the jailer's hands,
And words can languish in prison;
We can die alive, while with a sword
We can liberate ourselves, defend the dream,
And do what we want.

Walladah : Plant a word to reap wisdom,
Rather than a sword in a throat;
Dig not a grave for the dead
But holes for trees on the roadside.

Ibn Zaydoun : The word is shamed in my land,
Having been sold and resold in the market.
I care not if a sword is sold,
Being common to thief and prince;
But the word is Allah's mystery,
How dare they sell Allah's mystery?

Walladah : Power seeks the artist;
For it gains thus both charm and glamour,
And real worth. But no power can survive
If it does not recognize the value of man.
Listen, Waleed: power now means everything to you,

To me it means nothing;
For all I want is a heart to shelter,
Wherein I could be sheltered.

Ibn Zaydoun : I do love you, though my passion
Is hardly that of common men,
Neither the joy of meeting,
Nor the pain of parting.
For me to love is to seek man's dignity,
To break the fetters herein imposed on man;
To read the charm of dreams in children's faces
And know that time will not wear it out.
To me, love is this Cordova,
And you are the city's worship
And transcendent beauty;
From the highest minaret in the city
Your eyes shine

Walladah : I fear those kings;
Do not visit them.

Ibn Zaydoun : But I must. I have to tell them
What I believe, fearing none.
If thus I die, it will be for
The minarets of Cordova.

Walladah : You still dream that kings can do it;
But you'll realize your folly
And, one day, you will regret it.
Cupfuls of sorrow await you in kings' courts.

Ibn Zaydoun : Having deceived their peoples,
Our rulers need a reminder;
And nothing can make them wake up to reality
Like a vision of the end,
And the end is in sight.
They have sold the minarets of Cordova,
There is nothing, in fact, left to be sold,
And the auction has to stop.

(exit Walladah)

(alone on the stage)

A ruler is either a sword or a word,
And they may listen to my words.
A ruler may be a jailer, or a fair judge,
And some of them may be fair.
Now I must visit those kings,
Giving my dream a tongue,
After having for long,
Paced the streets in silence.
Oh, how difficult it is
To put the dream in words;
Oh, how difficult it is

To stay alive among the dead.

(A Song) : O homeland dear,
You've been to me a dream,
A faith so true,
So high and yet so near!

For a time I worshipped you,
Painting my *Qiblah** on your brow,
Seeking Allah in your heart,
For faith the genuine seat,
O homeland sweet!

BLACKOUT

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* The place to which Muslims direct their faces at prayer, i.e. Mecca.

SCENE III

(Ibn Zaydoun, at home. Abu Hayyan enters)

Ibn Zaydoun : As you can see,
I'm on the point of departure.
There's nothing else I can do.
I shall visit all the kingdoms of Andalusia
With this single message:
The ultimate shame is to allow
The minarets of Cordova to fall;
God can never forgive us such a sin.

Abu Hayyan : Ask them simply to unify their ranks,
For the end is indeed at hand;
Spell out the danger:
The minarets, mosques, our history,
Our honour and our glory —
All will perish indeed.

Ibn Zaydoun : I am, in truth, a little apprehensive, for
In times of ignorance
There can be no difference between bird and fly,
Between a jasmine orchard and a waste land,
Or, between the panegyrics addressed
To the dull and supine
And serious words that spell your end and mine!

Abu Hayyand: Oh, do go to them!
Tell them that our swords
Are pointing in the wrong direction;
They must distinguish between swords
That kill the enemy and swords
That kill our kith and kin.

(Song) : How sad it is to have a homeland
Without identity,
How bad it is to have a people,
Without a cause!
O homeland sweet,
Will no one remember your birth?
Will no one remember your glories?
Will no one remember you,
My homeland sweet?

(Ibn Zaydoun enters the court of the first king, referred to below as King I)

Ibn Zaydoun : The current Arab situation, my lord,
Tells of impending disaster:
There's a war here and a war there

And leaderships are mushrooming
Everywhere in Andalusia!
Why don't we unite our ranks
In Allah's religion?
We'll be lost if we don't, my lord!

King I : What can I do?
I've done my best to unify them,
But they all refuse to let me be their leader,
When I am the leader!
My army can defend every inch
Of Andalusian soil!

Ibn Zaydoun : The day will come when our blood is shed,
Our women raped,
And no one will take pity on us,
Subjects or monarchs.

King I : I will not surrender my sword
To the rogues;
Should I abandon my army?

Ibn Zaydoun : It doesn't matter who leads the army!

King I : Oh, but it does. It does matter to me.

Ibn Zaydoun : It may be you, I'm sure,
But may it not be someone else?

King I : I cannot accept any other!
Now sing with me!

(in ludicrous tones, delivers the following lines)

Sing now: long live the people great!

I do not care for matters of state!
Say: down with every reprobate,
With freedom when it high had sate,
With me as well, if so is fate,
For in my arms, now as of late,
Is a gipsy beauty consummate!

Ibn Zaydoun : Stop your present wars,
Put an end to the bloodshed!

King I : I can't put my sword to rest;
But shall chase away the silly rival
And kill him who dares disturb my ambition
To reign supreme, the leader of them all,
Beloved of them all!

Ibn Zaydoun : What would you achieve then?

King I : Just that! Aren't I worthy of it?
Worthiest to lead the march of Islam
In this land?
Go then, tell them I don't object
To being elected leader.
My army, my money, my power,
Take them all, but make me leader!

Ibn Zaydoun : They don't want that

King I : Then my sword will make them want it.

Ibn Zaydoun : Your sword only sheds Muslim blood.

King I : Ay, for the religion of God.

Ibn Zaydoun : And for your dream.

King I : Are you here to admonish me?
I care but little for poets' advice .

Ibn Zaydoun : I only care for Muslim blood;
Enough has been shed,
Allah cannot like it.
(The King's Secretary enters in an ecstasy)

Secretary : My lord! Your army has destroyed
All ports and bridges!

King I : Good, good!

Secretary : Twenty thousand soldiers are advancing!
In the name of Islam
And, in support of God's religion,
We have pulled down innumerable
Muslim homes and taken
Twenty thousand prisoners and slaves,
Muslim women, my lord,
For Allah's noble cause and for Islam.

King I : Oh, good! That's very good!
Now send in some of our 'special' forces,
To bring him down.
Spare no expense: pay them a million, millions,
But he must be overthrown.

Secretary : And, should we fail to do so?

King I : Incite all students and workers,
Pay them and make them take to the streets:
They can organize demonstrations, can't they,
To burn, destroy and devastate all his cities.

May Allah support our efforts to wreck
And ruin those Muslims.

Secretary : Those aggressors you mean?

King I : Those Muslim aggressors!

Ibn Zaydoun : *(almost aside)*
When low and stupid people rule,
The voice of reason is stifled;
No use to me are you, O babbling fool,
On whose murderous sword I had gambled.
I must see another king.

(Ibn Zaydoun approaches another king, referred to below as King II, but played by the same actor, in a different costume, and surrounded by courtiers).

Ibn Zaydoun : My lord I've come to you
With a fair argument:
People can't take any more
Anywhere in Andalusia:
Famine is imminent,
The land is nearly lost,
While rulers and leaders are fighting
Each other for supremacy.
Vice and venality are rife,
And the people have had enough of corruption,
Conspiracies and dark intrigues.
You need go no farther afield
Than the next territory:
See for yourself: people will

Rise in arms, and there will be a rebellion!

King I. : I don't think so! People over here are docile;
They like to remain silent:
It makes them, and me, happy!
Oh, how wonderful it is for a people
To be so quiet; it's convenient, isn't it?
The lights you see everywhere may look nice,
But they actually enable me
To see, as well as hear, everything

Ibn Zaydoun :When the deluge comes,
And soon it must,
It won't spare anyone!
The fools in our midst
Will realize their heinous crimes.
The people, my lord, will revolt!

King II : The old saying is:
If speech be silver-gilt,
Silence is golden.
Don't rule a people who like to talk,

Teach them first to be quiet.
My people are like the watch in my pocket:
I can make it go fast or slow,

Adjust it to summer time,
Then back to winter time.
I can make them blow my trumpet

And dance willy-nilly to my tune;
My sword is here unsheathed,
And the throats of my herd feel it.

Ibn Zaydoun : *(almost aside)*
Have kings come to regard their peoples
As herds?
What disease infects our minds?
Oh, how bad it is to have a nation
Without men, to plant trees
Without shadows, to know that your wound
Can never heal!
O land of my fathers!
I have nothing to offer except words!
Can words awaken the dead?
Are words any use
When all about you are dead?

BLACKOUT

SCENE IV

(The Garden of Ibn Zaydoun's house. Enter Zahraa, Walladah's maid, followed by Ziyad, Ibn Zaydoun's valet).

Ziyad : Oh, look how beautiful the night is!
Everything is gone to sleep, even our worries!
I feel I have shed the troubles of centuries,
Never slept as soundly as I did yesterday:
I was happy!
Listen! Can we have a party?
Why not? Come on! Let us dance!
You are my queen, aren't you?
But I am a vizier who gives up all for love!

Zahraa : Would you, in real life, give up high office
For our humble orchard?

Ziyad : You are my high office!

Zahraa : I only love you!

Ziyad : In my poverty!

Zahraa : Deprivation of love is real poverty,
And real hunger is that for passion.

Ziyad : The heart and the stomach
May not be full
At one and the same time!

Zahraa : I love you, Ziyad.

Ziyad : I cannot live without you.

Zahraa : What if our masters separate?

Ziyad : *(surprised)* Oh, no! I don't believe they will.

Zahraa : I fear that our burgeoning love
Will be blown away by tempests.
A fragile jasmine bud
Cannot withstand the raging winds;
Our masters are like firm trees
And can be but little shaken,
But Oh for the jasmine bud!

Ziyad : We are the poor of the land,
Lowly by birth and humble office,
But we have love, an edifice
Greater than a sumptuous palace
And richer than all earth's treasures.

Zahraa : I wish we'd never separate.

Ziyad : Even if we die,
The end will unite us.

Zahraa : Neither money nor title
Is wrapped in the shroud.

Ziyad : True love is immortal.

Zahraa : Here is my mistress, Walladah.

(Exit Ziyad and Zahraa, as Walladah enters, followed by Ibn Zaydoun. The design should suggest that this palace had seen better days. The glory of the past is in the air. On the wall hangs a portrait of a king--Walladah's dead father).

Walladah : Welcome my vizier! Oh, no! I should rather
Call you my love! come in ! I can't wait
To hear your last poem.
I find my life in your poetry
And want you to be my poet alone!

Ibn Zaydoun : Poetry isn't enough, my queen,
If any use at all!

Walladah : Poetry is a kingdom unto itself.

Ibn Zaydoun : It has no teeth,
Nor can a heart stand up to the sword.

Walladah : The heart is more powerful
Than the armies of the land.

Ibn Zaydoun : The sword can strike farther than the tongue.

Walladah : If I have a choice, I'd opt for the heart.

Ibn Zaydoun : When a decision has to be made,
Only a sword can decide the choice.

Walladah : Don't talk of decisions and choices!

We come to life, in spite of ourselves,
Become the prisoners of this world, subjected
To other people's decisions, until
An exit is made, unsought and unchosen.

Ibn Zaydoun : How can a heart conquer
A sword-carrying executioner?

Walladah : Now tell me, Abul-Waleed,
What are you really after?
You seek power and glory,
But still want love and poetry!
You must make a choice.

Ibn Zaydoun : I love my verse as much as life itself,
But the devil lives among us.
I need a powerful sword
As much as an artist's heart.

Walladah : I don't like the sword.

Ibn Zaydoun : But I want it! Look! The Emir Al-Mu'tamad
Yesterday had a talk with me. He said:
Why don't we restore the power
Of the old royal house--Walladah's!
An army can be mustered for the liberation
Of Cordova and the restitution
Of your kingdom in all parts of Andalusia.
The small kingdoms will be united
And the glory of Andalusia recovered.
Twenty thousand fighters can be mobilized,
A terrible army, well-trained and equipped,
To remove the stupid and idiotic rulers of the land!
Ah, Walladah, then, our wedding ceremony
Will surpass the chronicled feasts of kings.

Walladah : *(in a fit of anger)* How could you do this, and
Behind my back too? I do not want
To be queen! I really don't!

Ibn Zaydoun : But this is a chance we can't miss!

Walladah : Can't you believe me?
Marry me!

Ibn Zaydoun : When our plan succeeds
And the kingdom is restored.

Walladah : What do you want a kingdom for?

Ibn Zaydoun : I wish you'd understand:
I do not want power for the sake of power,
But to be able to do something for the people:
Their sorrows gnaw at me, living as they do
In deprivation, a prey to sedition and intrigues.

Walladah : Go to the people then!

Ibn Zaydoun : The people are not the decision-makers,
While our ignorant rulers, lost in rotting mazes —

Walladah : *(interrupting)* Tell me now, Waleed!
Do you really want me as a wife, a mother,
And a friend? Or as the promise of a throne?
If you care for the people's prosperity,
Go to them and lead them to a new life!
Turn your back on the Caliphs, Emirs and rulers!
For, in spite of oppression, the people
Are still the real decision-makers!

If you want a real throne, go to the people!

Ibn Zaydoun : The people are waiting for their queen.

Walladah : My throne is lost, irrevocably!
Your throne is your verse!

Ibn Zaydoun : My verse has fought and lost.

Walladah : Go to the people, for I don't need a throne!

Ibn Zaydoun : Would you like to see the swords of Tarek
Beaten in the streets of Cordova?
Would you have us lose the land
Or let Islam be a stranger in our homeland?
Shall we leave our dear land to the Franks?
It is to deal with this danger
That I need to have power.
Our rulers never listened to me
But fought over leadership like vultures.

Walladah : Who did you see?

Ibn Zaydoun : I saw all kings
And made a clean breast of things,
But no one listened.
Our people have seen many disasters,
Have overcome them, both great and small,
But having these rulers,
Is yet the worst of all.

Walladah : But you had known that, Waleed!
You know well enough
They'd fight till death over a woman,
But never over matters of state.

Ibn Zaydoun : Indeed, but an attempt had to be made!

Walladah : In your verse is your beginning,
For a beginning must spring
From a pellucid vision,
From a fresh dream and a fresh mind,
And a whole new consciousness.
Will you raise the future
On the ruins of the past?

Ibn Zaydoun : My verse's bled to death,
And my words have been so uselessly spilt;
When people lose all hope
And the throbbing pulse
Is silent in the dream,
Then we are dead, more dead than alive,
And words are useless.

Walladah : The word is your sword, raise it
And it will raise you!

Ibn Zaydoun : When the land is a waste,
And life itself a waste,
With a travesty of justice in every state,
I cannot use words to realize my dream.
Indeed! my dream is my sword,
And let all words go to the winds.
I have begged in the streets of Cordova for a dream,
Something to put on paper, for the idiots to read,
For the weak, and for those who are half-dead.
My dream is not false,
But it cannot survive

When times are adverse;
This is the age of the sword,
Not the time for verse!

Walladah : Your heart is sword enough;
Your people want to hear your words;
They love your ever-glimmering light
And see their dream in you.
You could hold a sharp sword
But be trampled underfoot,
The word is above the sword,
Above iniquity and oppression.

Ibn Zaydoun : What have words done for you?
You've lost your throne, haven't you,
Queen of Cordova?

Walladah : I left the throne but willingly.

Ibn Zaydoun : You were removed.

Walladah : I turned it down; *(in agony)* how could I other wise?
They murdered my father,
Crucified him before my eyes,
Then cried over his body.
An innocent man was then
Condemned and killed,
And I was expected
To be thus deceived,
But I was not. I knew who had done it,
And, when offered the throne,
Could not accept it.
When man's humanity's shattered,

We turn into a blind herd,
And I refused to lead that herd.

(in a tone of confrontation)

Now listen to me, Waleed!
Your people can give you power,
If that's what you need.
And I still believe that they are
The real decision-makers.
As for me, you must be sure
Whether you still need a sweetheart
Without a throne.

Ibn Zaydoun : I do need power.

Walladah : Would you take me without my throne?

Ibn Zaydoun : I want you to be my wife,
And a queen on our throne.

Walladah : Would you still have me without a throne?

(Ibn Zaydoun thinks, tries to speak, hesitates, then falls silent. When he tries to speak again, she cuts him short).

Walladah : Oh, don't answer! Say nothing!
I know enough already!

BLACKOUT

SCENE V

(The King's Court. On the left a kind of study, used as office, plunged in darkness. In the Secretary's room, Right, a group of people are waiting. Waiting too is minister Rabi, who has important information for the King).

Rabi : You've heard, haven't you,
The story of our poetaster?

Voices : Abul-Waleed? Ibn Zaydoun?

Rabi : Indeed, he seems to think he's king,
Or the Awaited Mahdi, who's here
To save the world
And protect people from the sword of evil!
What fatal vanity!
The little poet has roamed
Far and wide, hurling accusations

And cursing all rulers
In every blessed city.
He's calling on all people to unite,
Possibly under his own command!
Is he, I wonder, fit enough, to be leader?

Man I : By Allah! I believe his message is lofty;
He still hopes that our ancient glory
Will be restored.

Man II : We've been reduced to midgets,
Exuding malice in barren times;
The old defenders of the faith
Are now playthings in the hands
Of a wicked enemy.

Man III : Oh, do justice to Abul-Waleed!
I bear witness to his nobility
And his noble call for unity.

Secretary : His Majesty the King!
(Flourish, herald proclaiming the entrance of King).

King : Well, what is it?

Secretary : Your minister is here, my lord,
Apparently on urgent business.
(Rabi crosses the invisible barrier; stage lighting now shifts to the King).

Rabi : Forgive me, Your Majesty, for calling thus
Without appointment.

King : That's all right, Rabi.
You may sit.

Now, what is it?

Rabi : A very grave matter indeed.
(looks at those present then falls silent)

King : What is it?
(Realizes that Rabi wants to talk in private)
I see; all right. You may leave us now.
(King and Rabi are now alone)

Rabi : *(pretending to divulge a secret)*
I have just heard that Abul-Waleed
Is touring all capitals, calling
On all rulers to unite.

King : Well?

Rabi : He says that our destiny hinges
On the unity of all—an obvious ruse
By the poetaster who now plans
To be king.

King : *(in panic, grips the chair)*
To be king?
What would we do for a living then?

Rabi : Have you heard his recent verse?
He has indited panegyrics
Addressed to every ruler!
He has written poems in praise of Ibn Amer,
Ibn Sa'd, and the Emir Al-Mu'tamad.
He has accepted money from all Kings

King : Eulogy for the kings? All of them?
Oh, never trust a poet!

I knew he was ambitious.
(after a pause, in obvious anger)
How did you know all this?

Rabi : Through Abdoun, our faithful servant.
I sent him in disguise after Abul-Waleed,
And now he's back.

King : Where is he?

Rabi : Oh, close by!

(calls) : Abdoun!
(Rabi goes out and comes back, through the invisible barrier, with Abdoun. The latter is a 'typical' spy, big with large eyes, and his hands now tremble with fear).

King : Abdoun! Come tell me all you heard.

Abdoun : *(looks now at Rabi, now at the King, then receives a signal from Rabi, apparently pre-arranged)*
My lord! I heard Abul-Waleed
Exhorting Ibn Amer to liberate
Cordova and recover its old glory.

King : Well?

Abdoun : He says you're a ruler who doesn't know
The first thing about ruling,
That you're behind the predicament of Islam
And the hell in which the Arabs live.

King : *(livid with rage, stands and sits in agitation)*
What *are* you saying?

Rabi : He says, my lord, that your chair
Is too big for you.

King : *(Screaming)*
Keep nothing from me! tell me all!

Abdoun : I can't.

King : You must.

Abdoun : Well, he says that for years now
Your army's been sold to the Franks,
That you've had a palace built
In the heart of the city,
For which the people paid, in blood,
And that they actually
Exhaust their livelihood
In paying your taxes,
While you are eating up the treasury.

Rabi : What have you eaten, my lord?
What have you taken? Nothing,
Apart from power.

King : Carry on!

Abdoun : He also says, my lord,
That in your harem, there are hundreds
Of beautiful women and slave girls,
That the wealth of your people
Has been spent on harlots,
That you allow your army
To suck the blood of your people,
To make excessive profits in illicit trade,

While the commanders, unashamedly,
Trade in their very homeland,
And have sold out to the enemy,

King : *(screaming)*
Shut up! I've heard enough!
Bring him here at once!
Do you hear, Rabi?

Rabi : I'm sorry, my lord, but who?

King : Arrest that despicable creature!
I want Abul-Waleed here in chains!

BLACKOUT

SCENE VI

(Walladah's house. Enter Rabi and his entourage, followed by a number of soldiers)

Ibn Zaydoun : Rabi? What's up?
Still afraid to go about the city
Without your guard?

Walladah : That is how people in this country
Are today: fearful of one another.

Rabi :Oh, I'm not afraid, but I do try
To see behind my back.

Ibn Zaydoun : Never trust back-stabbers
Or insipid rulers.

Walladah : When the insipid are in power,
They must stab their masters.

Rabi : My lady! you are the masters indeed,
But we are not insipid.

Ibn Zaydoun : Walladah is joking.

Rabi : I know my lady well,
Sometimes what she says in jest
Is meant to hurt.

Ibn Zaydoun : O what contrarieties!
Should we laugh or cry,
Speak up or whisper,
Engage in dreams or deny
In silence the visionary splendour?

Rabi : *(significantly)*

A dream can cost you much;
In fact, it can make you lose everything.
If the sea is too deep,
Why dream of crossing it?

Ibn Zaydoun : When a man's worth is intrinsic,
He shouldn't bother if all else is lost.

Rabi : What I care about is survival,
Even if the others perish!

Walladah : Oh, I know you well enough,
Who you are, what you were,
And what you do right now!

Rabi : I only do that which
Satisfies the Sultan!

Ibn Zaydoun : You may survive by yourself for a while,
But are you sure you can survive,
All by yourself, all the time?

Rabi : I know your dreams!
Follow them for ever in the streets,
Keep them in view for ever, because,
If abandoned, they will abandon you!

Ibn Zaydoun: Mine is a legitimate dream.

Rabi : All dreams are .

Ibn Zaydoun: Not a thief's dream, surely!

Walladah : Or a traitor's!

Rabi : Well, a thief is entitled to dream of security,
Of a home and a family, and a hungry man
In entitled to steal! In the year of famine
Caliph Omar suspended the penalty for theft.
Again, to steal what is your right
Cannot be against the law.

Walladah : How bad it is to entertain
In these tedious times
A tedious guest!
Tell me Rabi: do you know anything
About the law?

(exit Walladah)

Rabi : My law is to be alone above the law;
I offer him my life and obedience.

Ibn Zaydoun : Even if he makes a mistake?

Rabi : What do you mean by mistake?
Rulers don't make mistakes.

Ibn Zaydoun : A ruler may be ignorant

Of the real worth of people.
He can turn your heart into a prison
So that you develop a fear of yourself,
And your own shadow begins to dog you
Like a spy!

Rabi : A ruler never truly errs,
And such errors as you suppose
Are justified by security.
You apply the common law to people,
Not to a ruler, who is guided
By inspiration and a vision!
(Rabi stops suddenly, holds Ibn Zaydoun's hands, while the guards surround him).
Let's go then. The king wants to see you.

Ibn Zaydoun : Are you mediating between us?

Rabi : Oh, no! I here have a royal decree,
A warrant for your arrest.

BALCKOUT

SCENE VII

(The King's office)

King : *(Alone)*
So, I'm a ruler who doesn't know
The first thing about government? ha!
The rootcause of Islam's predicament,
And the hell in which the Arabs live!?
For years my army's been sold to the Franks
And I have a house built of people's blood!?
Amazing! where are those beautiful women
Said to be in my court? Where are
The slave girls? I can't see any!
(Enter Rabi and Ibn Zaydoun)
Oh, tell me, by Allah, how much were you paid?
How much does one get for the sanctity
Of his own homeland--a homeland that is sold
At bacchanals, for rich gifts and women?
Oh, these are times when a conscience

Is so easy to buy! I have always believed
That to sell your verse is to sell
Your honour and your land; is this my reward
For being so good to you?

Ibn Zaydoun : My lord..

King : No more lies, please! Just tell me how much!
Tell me what happened in the courts
Of Ibn Amer, the Emir Al-Mu'tamad,
Ibn Haytham and Ibn Sa'd! How did you conspire

Against the future of our people and homeland?
How was your conscience sold? Why did you ask
For the armies of Amer, Ibn Sa'd and Al-Mu'tamad?
Why did you say that the people were grumbling,
Even in the streets of Cordova, and that I had
Sold my army to the Franks?

Ibn Zaydoun : My Lord! Why don't you enquire
If you want the truth?
Send your messengers to these rulers
For truth cannot be dimmed by slanderers.
I have seen Ibn Amer, Ibn Sa'd,
And the Emir Al-Mu'tamad.
I have visited all kingdoms
And asked the Emirs and rulers to unite,
For Islam is the religion of all,
And its victory a victory for all,
Nor does any one like to have it otherwise.
I said that we had a common road to take.
We may have differences, I said,

And estrangements within the one family
Are not uncommon, but Allah's religion
Is above us all. Indeed, we may separate
Or burn to the socket, but Islam survives.

King : It is true then!
You've had a passion for leadership for years,
And still dream of becoming our leader!
You've made us appear as the perpetrators
Of the present disunity, having fallen out
With each other, and even fought one another!
Now you, wishing to unify our ranks
And lead us ahead, will perforce be
Our thinking mind, the defender of the faith
And the poet par excellence!

Ibn Zaydoun : I am a poet, my lord, though I have chosen
A different path, opting for high office
And decision-making. I cannot choose
But to continue now, perhaps I can
Realize my dream and restore
The old glory of our land.
As for differences, they are but natural,
And no complete agreement is ever possible.

King : But I never asked you to do this!
I never told you to go to the Emirs
Or to tell them that our religion
Was in jeopardy!

Ibn Zaydoun : But it is in jeopardy,
And I have said it;

Our religion, our people and our land
Are all in danger; and religion, my lord,
Is the highest cause, and we shall always
Be prepared to die for it.

King : Still dreaming of becoming our leader!

Ibn Zaydoun : Could you deny that the Franks
Have dismembered us, that tragedy
Is imminent? We are fighting one another,
Wasting both men and money,
Whilst our enemy is lying in wait for us.
My message to the Emirs was:
Stand up as one man in support of Islam!

King : And unite under your leadership?

Ibn Zaydoun : Just unite, my lord!

King : So that you become leader?

Ibn Zaydoun : Can't you understand?

King : The dream of power blinded you
And made you sell us so cheaply!

Ibn Zaydoun : Will no one understand me?

King : Have they given you as much as I have?
Unlikely! but the passion for leadership
Has corrupted all poets in our time.

Ibn Zaydoun : I am not a leader, my lord,
But a poet in whose depths
The dreams are writhing.
All I want is a land untarnished by sedition,

A people free from tribulation,
Men, who are both devout and honest,
And rulers who truly protect our homeland.

King : Have you gone mad, Abul-Waleed?
Protect our homeland? Haven't we done so?
Is there a traitor among us claiming to be honest?
Your passion for leadership has undone you!
Rabi! take him forthwith to prison!

Rabi : Yes, my lord. Guards! arrest him!

Ibn Zaydoun : How sorely are real men missed,
When the dull and stupid
Are in positions of trust,
And foreign agents disguised
As noble fighters!
I'm sworn, my lord,
Never to bend low,
But will always dream of restoring
The old glory of this land.
Our lodestar is Allah's religion,
For it no sacrifice is too great,
The world, life and children.
The land is a shrine so sacred,
And Cordova's soil a prayer in the heart;
Cordova's tears are shed o'er the falling
Minaret, but are a dawn prayer rising,
A supplication gently ascending.
Religion unites: impostors disperse;
The land is faithful, should we play false?

These minaret prayers will always be heard
Reverberating, spreading Allah's word;
The mosque has always united us, heart and hand,
For the pulpits of faith, my lord,
Are the most sacred thing in this land.
The religion of Allah will
Unite us as one nation,
Even if disparate,
Or weak in determination.

CURTAIN


PART II

SCENE I

(A song) : O prison-governor do not wonder
If the cells burst open, in a fire huge,
Time, tomorrow, will be our reckoner,
When the river obstructed is a deluge!

Chorus : The river is a deluge,
The river is a deiuge!

(Ibn Zaydoun, sad and weary, stands in a dirty cell, with a rough-looking guard at the gate. Rabi enters)

Rabi : *(to the guard)*
I need hardly tell you how
To deal with the prisoner.
Teach him how daylight turns
Into a dark cloud, and life itself
Into a night unending,

With shadows thickening
And pains unceasing.
He must see life
For what it is,
And hope that never is!
Show no mercy when in the morning
You give him to the dogs—
Or in the evening!
Allow no light into his cell
For darkness suits well
The damned traitor
Who sought to harm the king.
(whispers to the guard)
Report to me all who come here,
His friends, assistants and his women
And what they say,
And if you can, and rightly guess,
What he whispers to himself!

(moves closer to Ibn Zaydoun but says nothing to him)

Ibn Zaydoun : How odd are these times, Rabi!
Positions are exchanged,
And men's worth distorted;
Blasphemy is taken for faith,
And falsehood for truth;
Intrigues are decorations,
And pigmies giants,
While the corrupt traitors
Are lofty gallants!

I have an account with you to settle,
When all will realize
How false you are and how little!

(song) : The night may seem too long and still,
The morning faraway and pale;
Rulers may individuals kill,
And robbers steal and have their fill;
A maiden may be raped,
A land may be usurped,
But nothing is worse than this oppression!
Oh, do beware of oppression!

BALCKOUT

SCENE II

(Walladah's house; in one corner Walladah sits, accompanied by her maid Zahraa and Ziyad).

Walladah : They sent him to prison.

Zahraa : He was a haven for every lost soul.

Walladah : Oh, what lunacy!
The idiots are in power,
Robbers run the State,
And the pure are sent to prison!

Zahraa : I'm afraid for his life.
The traitorous Rabi is planning
To bring back his foreign mother
And crown himself as ruler of Cordova.
He wants Andalusia to go back to the Franks,
And, to this end, he's become the real power

In court, if only as a sword in the King's hand.
One day, I'm sure, he'll overthrow him.

Walladah : How heavy these days creep;
People's souls are dead,
And dwarfs masquerade as giants.

Zahraa : *(moves about)*
The songs of Abul-Waleed will always be sung
In the streets of the city! Though in prison,
He's still Cordova's poet, singer and lover!
Oh, what foolish times these are!
And people keep talking about it in the city.

Walladah : About what Zahraa?

Zahraa : They say that Abul-Waleed wants to unify
The ranks of our leaders, that his opponents
Are up against him, that they are behind
His current estrangement with the king.
But they also say that Abul-Waleed
Is an ambitious man, that he aspires
To higher office than the Viziership!

Walladah : Oh, damn the day he was made Vizier!
A dark day indeed it was!
Now I shall have to go.

Zahraa : What's worng, my queen?

Walladah : It's the time of reckoning with the King.
I never thought I'd ever go to him.
I've never seen him since he came
To power, boldly ascending

On the ruins of my throne.
I never sought after those ruins
Nor do I claim them now,
But, for the man I love,
I would give up my very life.

BLACKOUT

SCENE III

(The King's office. Walldah enters)

Walladah : My lord!
I haven't been to your palace for years.
Today I care for neither throne nor power,
For a throne is worthless to a heavy heart.
I am here to ask your forgiveness,
Knowing that you accept no injustice.
Abul-Waleed has spent a lifetime
In your service; can any one do more?
And you have raised him high,
For which he has been grateful.

King : No, he hasn't! How can you ask forgiveness
For this wicked trickster? Hasn't he,
For all my generosity, conspired
Against me? Both of you have, my queen!

Walladah : But I don't want a throne now;

For me this man's love is enough!

King : And to love him is to conspire against me?
You've believed this cowardly idler,
And so have plotted, in league with him,
To recover your throne.

Walladah : Real power, my lord, is security—
The banishment of your fear of others
And your fear of yourself:
Real power is integrity!
What I've lost is neither money nor power:
What I've lost is priceless. And that is why
I have no fear of time.

King : But you still conspire against the King?

Walladah : I seek nothing beyond my love's heart.

King : Do you expect me to believe
That the queen is now in love,
Has quit all dreams of power,
And turned into a poet's paramour?

Walladah : You may possess the earth
And frighten the world,
While something inside you is dead!
Things have little value in themselves.
For me real power is to be in love:
No good will come from him
Who cannot love or be loved.

King : The verse of that misguided poet
Has corrupted your reason;

And both of you have been stupid
Enough to conspire against me!

Walladah : What's the use of being master of the world
With the qualities of a slave!

King : What will people say:
The king has jailed a woman?

Walladah : I still hope that the truth will emerge,
That the light of the morning
Will once again shine,
In spite of the shadows, prolonging
This night of sorrow.

(King is frozen at his desk. He grips his chair tightly, trembling a little and apparently unable to make reply. He tries to call his office director but fails to do so.)

The truth is too powerful for your swords,
Your men and your prisons;
Rights may be violated in times
Of ignorance and stupidity,
And injustice may eclipse the light of day,
But the voice of the truth is louder
Than all the lies of power.

(as she leaves the stage)

However long it may take,
The truth will rise again,
A glorious daybreak.

BLACKOUT

SCENE IV

(Walladah's house; Rabi enters)

Walladah : Rabi? what are you after now?
Have you forgotten your treachery
And ignoble behaviour?
What do you want?

Rabi : *(coldly)*
Is this how guests should be entertained?
I'm in your house, our queen.

Walladah : Tell me now what you want, or else...

Rabi : Or else what?

Walladah : I'll order my guards to throw you out.

Rabi : *Your* guards?
(laughs)
Your guards are now my men.

If I so wish, I could order
The queen to be thrown out naked
For everyone to see in the city.
I could get witnesses to testify
That the princess has been discovered
In bed with—Oh, it doesn't matter
Whether it be a guard, a driver,
A street-vendor or, well...
(pause)
Our bag of scandals is full.

Walladah : Despicable scoundrel!

Rabi : Don't lose your temper, lady!
I was with the king yesterday,
And he seems to want you in prison,
And expects me to carry out his wish.
The guards at your door, my men,
Have reported everything to me,
So that I now have a thousand witnesses,
And your prison cell is ready.

(approaches and shows her a paper)

This is your jail decree,
And I keep it in my pocket, although
I pleaded with the king yesterday
Until he relented.

Walladah : What do you want, Rabi?

Rabi : A new beginning, though, at the moment,
I'm rather pressed for time.

Walladah : Come on! Tell me what is it?

Rabi : I want my queen.

Walladah : I'd rather go to prison!
Look here you surly cur!
You can tell your debauched king,
And your heretic self as well,
To go to hell!
Better be in jail than live in shame!
I'm not afraid of prison.

Rabi : Oh, please, I beseech you,
Not so loud! The guard will hear!

Walladah : O shame upon shame!
Are your dogs in my home?

Rabi : I want you, O queen of our throne,
Have loved you for years,

(continuing coldly)

And have so much to tell you.
One thing you must know now, though —
A decision I have taken
Which, I believe, you must know.
Abul-Waleed will die tomorrow.

Walladah : Oh, God!

Rabi : I don't know the manner of his death;
There's poison, there are the dogs,
And the gallows, of course,
And I shall be there myself.

Walladah : *(loses her composure)*
Oh, no! please don't!
Don't kill Abul-Waleed,
I beg you, Rabi!

Rabi : Oh, you beg me, do you?
The price is easy to pay —
You, the queen of our kingdom.
I want your old glory and royal house.
Either that or, of course, the head
Of Abul-Waleed! I love you,
Believe me, and want you.

Walladah : Do you believe I can ever love you
Or see you in my bed?
You, the epitome of treason,
Whom I hated all my life!
I'm still in love with Abul-Waleed.

Rabi : Then he must die!

Walladah : Have you no religion?

Rabi : No

Walladah : No loyalty to a fatherland?

Rabi : None.

Walladah : If you have any morals left,
Leave me alone.

Rabi : Having waited so long for you?
Having carried my dream of you
From year to year?

The whole world lies at your feet,
And my heart too.

Walladah : I don't want your heart,
Your armies or your swords.

Rabi : My heart is burning with love.
I shall be back at dawn,
Perhaps we shall agree
And Abul-Waleed will live.

(exit)

Walladah : *(frantically moving about)*
What shall I do?
Oh, what can I do?
If I say 'no',
Abul-Waleed will die,
If I sell myself,
I shall be killed every day!
(breaks down sobbing)
Oh, my God!
All is lost:
A father and a mother,
A throne and a lover,
Now remains but honour!
Oh, God, Oh, God!
Purity is dead!
Can it be true,
Can it be real?
In an age of dogs,
The price is honour.

(Song) : The prison is vast,
A city of strife,
How long can it last?
Too short is life!
Confinement is a feeling,
With you to start,
And though you be fleeing,
'Tis in your beart.

BLACKOUT

SCENE V

(Ibn Zaydoun's prison cell. Walladah enters. They embrace.)

Walladah : In you I see the sweetness of time lost,
The real self I miss;
You still keep that nectar of truth,
Which life holds in the breast.

Ibn Zaydoun : In you I see both family and friend,
And an irretrievable past;
Time has played me false, my love.

Walladah : Never trust time or power.

Ibn Zaydoun : I have been faithful, though power betrayed;
How hard it is to nurture a dream
In cowardly times! My dream is great,
And I have paid for it.

Walladah : You placed a wrong bet,

Opting for power, and leaving
Your people to suffer
Corruption and humiliation.
Poetry is your sword,
People are your army.

Ibn Zaydoun : History repeats itself:
Dreams are the cheapest to sell
When times are false.

Walladah : Still unrepentent? I had hoped
You'd abandon your dream of power,
And come back to the people
Like a nightingale, pouring forth
Your songs!

Ibn Zaydoun : The prisoner in his dungeon,
The words suppressed in the heart;
The obstinate questionings
In the faces of children,
And death at the street corner,
All bespeak a sword.

Walladah : You will continue, though in prison,
To shine as a beacon
To the rising generation.

Ibn Zaydoun : I still have an account to settle;
The wound in my heart is too deep.
Confinement has strengthened my faith
In power: Ask me not, therefore, to be
The green oasis in our desert,
But rather a fire to burn our vile rulers.

Don't expect me to sing of peace
And compassion, but to hold a sword
And restore the past glory of the land

Walladah : This is the parting of the ways:
Cry not over me then,
If we for ever separate.

BLACKOUT

SCENE VI

(Same. Rabi enters, whip in hand, and goes round the cell).

Rabi : *(to the guards)*
Leave us alone!
(to Ibn Zaydoun)
I'm glad to see you in this pleasant company,
With idiots and thieves! Quite befitting!
Your dreams soared too high,
With hopes shooting the sky!
You played the part of the one and only
Knight, supremely glorious,
Unrivalled in love, unrivalled in verse!
Nightly the women of Cordova called
On the house of the Vizier,

Lovely flowers from whom you picked
The loveliest, Walladah! You captured

An oasis, a poet's inspiration,
And every poet's ambition.
The descendent of a royal house
Fell in love with you, Oh!
Many are the mistakes we make,
And you, mister lover,
Are the obvious mistake,
Of giving fools power!

Ibn Zaydoun : If justice is to be done,
Your head should now hang down;
But it will, Rabi, one day.

Rabi : I was wrong to let you live:
It is your head that should hang down!

Ibn Zaydoun : It's a topsy-turvy world,
When the pure are in prison,
And the corrupt are at large;
It's a cowardly king that puts
The reins of power in the hands of idiots.

Rabi : A day will come when everything
Will go my way:
I shall soon choose a people to rule.

Ibn Zaydoun : You'll choose a people?
I thought the choice was with the people!

Rabi : It's lovely to rule a people
Who don't understand anything;
Who neither speak nor dream.
And you can realize your dream

When people do not appreciate
The value of dreams!
You can steal, you can kill,
You can do worse still,
And be not disgraced,
For everything is then permissible!

Ibn Zaydoun : A ruler may kill some people,
But not the people;
He may jail individuals,
Steal a piece of land,
Or rape a woman,
But he can never kill a nation.
The power of a nation may be dormant,
Like a volcano's, for some time;
The jailer's voice and tyrannical whip
May for some time enforce a silence,
Until the day of eruption comes.
All rulers forget the past!

Rabi : The people are a herd.
And you rule them,
Using a handful of men,
A measure of fear,
And a degree of tyranny.
As for the men, first pick
Someone to set an example:
Victimize him to make him do
What you would have all others do.
Another man should be trained
To lie, to be afraid and cowardly.

Trust none but the cowardly,
Listen to none but the ignorant,
And you will grow bigger and bigger
And rule many nations.

Ibn Zaydoun : Oh, yes! rulers make these mistakes;
Agents and bloodhounds are common,
Honest men are often thrown in prison,
But the people crush these rulers in the end.
What stupid times are these!

Rabi : *Your* times are stupid!
You live in fantasy,
Hearing the drums of ancestry,
The verses of heroic Antarah,
And the love ditties of Leila!

Ibn Zaydoun : Chastity is out of place
In a house of infamy,
And truth is lost
In the mazes of mendacity.

Rabi : I was wrong to promise her,
Wrong to honour my promise.

Ibn Zaydoun : I hadn't thought you cared
About honouring promises.

Rabi : But I did promise her,
I had wanted your head, but then
Made her a promise.

Ibn Zaydoun : What promise, Rabi?

Rabi : Your death would've made me very happy,

But I promised her.
In any event, your head can't mean much
To me now! For I have my Walladah,
Who's more precious than life itself.

(exit)

Ibn Zaydoun : *(alone)*
I see! So she's betrayed me,
Deserted the heart that loved her
As easily as she ceded the dream!
When I faced my enemy,
Who knew me as well as I knew him,
I took up arms and fought;
I cared but little for defeat or victory,
Knowing it was an enemy;
But how can I now face this treachery?
The flames cannot die down,
Nor can the bleeding stop!
But it must!
(assumes a determined stand)
If it is my heart that played me false,
I would fain kill it,
And with it my love.
Oh, let her betrayal
Be her own shroud.

(song) : When people's eyes begin their nightly voyage,
In my mind's eye rises her lovely image,
A part of myself lost!
The dregs in the cup, and memories burning,
Are ashes of a lifetime, silently singing,

A part of myself lost!
The time of silken dalliance, for long gone,
Has left but despair which this day won,
O part of myself lost!

BLACKOUT

SCENE VII

(Same. Ziyad enters, embraces Ibn Zaydoun in tears)

Ibn Zaydoun : Oh, welcome, Ziyad!
You're a man who's been so true in love.
No prison, no sorrows, no misfortunes
Could keep you away from me!

Ziad : You've been to me family and friends
Since my orphaned childhood.
Many a time have I begged the governor
To let me stay with you, and many
Have been my disappointments.
I was sad: I sat in the sun, alone,
While no sunbeam could brighten
Your loneliness.

Ibn Zaydoun : You've been so faithful, over the years.

(overcome with emotion)
So few are those who are!
How is Zahrra?

Ziad : Oh, we've been married for years now.

Ibn Zaydoun : Good news! Any family?

Ziad : A boy, Waleed, and a girl, Walladah!

Ibn Zaydoun : Tell me about Walladah.

Ziad : Her eyes are the light of morn,
Her hair the colour of night,
Her mind, though small,
Is sharp as a sword!

Ibn Zaydoun : May Allah protect you, my son!

BLACKOUT

SCENE VIII

(Walladah's palace. She is seated at the entrance with Abu Hayyan.)

Walladah : Welcome, Abu Hayyan!

Abu Hayyan : Greetings! Queen of our kingdom,
Spark of our old glory!

Walladah : Nothing old appeals to people;
Like everything else, a throne
Rusts away or dissolves in time!
Hence the humiliation of power!

Abu Hayyan : Have you seen Abul-Waleed?
How is he doing in prison?

Walladah : Still dreaming of high office!
The ideas of that drivelling lunatic
Will kill me; the passing away of my throne
Has, he says, shaken me! Ha!

If only I had a real man
With whom I could feel secure!
Fear is my undoing!

Abu Hayyan : Have no fear, for the people
Are still hopeful: they have faith
In Allah's power--too great to be
Confined in dark dungeons,
In bastions of oppression,
Or beaten by the tyranny of dictators!

Walladah : In my fear I had sought Waleed,
For protection, and hope, and
The promise of a new life,
But I am alone now.
Even my own house guards
Are now their men.

Abu Hayyan : We have to live with that fear·
The streets of Cordova have turned
Into a big jail: Allah have mercy on us,
And on Cordova!

Walladah : Everyday I hear subdued whispers,
Footsteps at the front door,
Behind the walls and in sidestreets.
I am afraid, Abu Hayyan.

Abu Hayyan : Did you know Al-Raazi?
Have you heard what happened to him?

Walladah : No!

Abu Hayyan : He was a minsiter in your father's government,
An old man of over seventy.

He was taken at dawn and, later,
With hands and feet tied,
Lynched in the night. Allah rest his soul!
He was found on the roadside dead,
But no explanation was given
As to the manner or the reason
For his death.

Walladah : The streets are full of fearful people.
Spies are everywhere, lurking at every corner,
And knocking on every door.
Hearts are choked with fear, mine too.

Abu Hayyan : I've heard rumours, I don't know how true,
Perhaps perpetrated by evil tongues,
Concerning your new man.

Walladah : Oh, you mean Rabi?

Abu Hayyan : Yes.

Walladah : But h'e a bloodhound, Hayyan!
I have him here for protection,
Not for love! You can't fall in love
With a bloodhound, can you?
Fear has made me accept:
I fear the vicissitudes of time,
Rulers and oppression.
The man I love never took pity on me;
He gambled away his life and mine,
Throwing away both past and present.
Listen, Abu Hayyan!
Waleed never loved me, but rather

The crown I once wore,
The kingdom I once was!

Abu Hayyan : Before Allah I witness
He loved you truly,
And sought none but you!

Walladah : He was always in love with power
And me, being an old, worn-out crown,
He loved to add to his new-won Viziership:
He wanted to be Caliph as well
But ended losing both.

Abu Hayyan : Before Allah I witness
He loved nothing else but you!
You could not understand his dream:
He absorbed the sufferings of the people,
And wanted to change a sordid reality
Through unity of ranks, but
Our rulers let him down.
He dreamt of restoring the old glory
Of Islam, of keeping alive the minarets
Of Cordova, but he was born at the wrong time.

Walladah : How hard it is to nurture a dream
When the times are lame,
When no man may tower above the rest;
The land is full of people
But I can hear her scream:
Where are the men?

BLACKOUT

SCENE IX

(Ibn Zaydoun's prison cell. He looks old and weary, a shadow of himself. Walladah is pale, with signs of ageing on her face).

Walladah : It's been such a long time, Waleed,
I feel we're completely changed!
Oh for a day when times were sweet,
When I could listen to your verse,
Overflowing with tenderness!

Ibn Zaydoun : We're once again together but
Can we our steps retrace?
And even if reunited,
Have we on earth a space?
My dearest native land
Denies me a place!
And time? my time is gone —
What I had felt and done,

Nor can I hope embrace!

Walladah : There's love that survives.

Ibn Zaydoun : Can love survive on memories?
To love is to give,
To water the earth with blood;
While despair kills all palm trees
And the flowers in the field.

Walladah : You're still my dream.

Ibn Zaydoun : My passion is dead and buried.

Walladah : Can't we try again, Waleed?

Ibn Zaydoun : Are you reviving a hope
Which is for ever gone?
And after all you've done?
The long days in prison,
In solitary confinement,
And the cold sad cell,
Have failed to break me;
But why did you betray
When you were life to me?

Walladah : I have not betrayed you.

Ibn Zaydoun : My tears flowed not from this
My harsh predicament!

Walladah : I have not betrayed you.

Ibn Zaydoun : But I did weep to think
You were in another man's bed!

Walladah : I never betrayed you:

Once I was given a choice,
And I chose to die so that you may live
I betrayed myself, not you,
Opting for death-in-life,
To keep you alive!

(exit)

Ibn Zaydoun : Your words are many years overdue,
What boots it now to cry, when all is lost,
My life and love and land, all lost!

(song) : We're back then together,
But can we time restore?
If reunited hither,
The place is ours no more!
O time of total loss!
This homeland we adore,
Gives me no place of rest,
What have we to live for,
When youth and love are lost?
O time of total loss!

Ibn Zaydoun : We may choose our place of rest,
Our hopes, our present and past,
But not our homeland!
It grieves my heart, Cordova,
To see you disintegrate;
Your love is my fate;
My childhood memories,
Those ashes in the grate,
Do scream and reverberate!
My dream of you is melancholy,

Both sorrow and joy alternate.
My love is steeped in faith,
The water that is blood,
The clay that's flesh!
Oh! much it grieves my heart,
To look on your shambles,
The morning dying away,
The night's persisting misery!
Would the wound in my heart heal
When the dream is gone for ever?
Farewell bright minarets!
Farewell sweet nights!
Farewell our dream defeated!
You're the fire which will consume us,
The disgrace that tears us apart,
And flows from our bleeding eyes!

(Abu Hayyan, Ziyad and Zahraa enter in consternation, while the guards flee).

Ibn Zaydoun : Abu Hayyan? Ziyad and Zahraa?
What can the matter be?

Abu Hayyan : Haven't you heard?

Ibn Zaydoun : Do tell me! What happened?

Abu Hayyan : The coward has run away;
He's joined the enemy army!

Ibn Zaydoun : Who? Rabi?

Abu Hayyan : But of course, who else?

Ibn Zaydoun : Well, what shall we do?
Where is the army, our men?
Where is the King?

Abu Hayyan : The king is suppressing all news of it.

Ziyad : The people keep asking about the army;
We had no idea what was happening!

Ibn Zaydoun : I just wonder
How that traitor,
Ever attained that trust!
What an impostor!
He's sold us!
He's sold Allah's religion!

Abu Hayyan : For years he's been supplying
The Franks with everything:
The army's money, weapons and men!
His father, Daoud, you may remember,
Was a wine merchant; and his cellar
Has been used in storing
Arms for the Franks.

Zahraa : Would you believe that the army
Is now in danger? All our armies
Are now besieged, I hear, at the border.

Ziyad : Would you believe that some of our men
Have run away with him?
He had removed all honest men, naturally,
From the army's command!

Abu Hayyan : To keep the threat of his sword alive!

Ibn Zaydoun : I was right to ask those rulers
To put aside their differences,
Wrong to pin my hopes on them!

Zahraa : The forces of that damned traitor
Are attacking everything in sight,
Even women and children.

Ziyad : When the kings ran away,
Deserting their homeland,
The armies retreated.

Ibn Zaydoun: They all ran away, did they?
That is how cowards wage war:
Personal safety is all they care for.

Abu Hayyan : Stories today circulate
About the farces of Andalusia:
One king trades in arms,
Another sells his land publicly
To the Franks, and a third,
More tragically,
Trades in people's blood.
Huge armies are sacrificed
In an internecine war.

Ziyad : People have fled the city!

Ibn Zaydoun : What would life be worth
If Cordova's minarets fall?

Abu Hayyan : I am not unfamiliar with disasters;
But the fear that Islam may disappear
From this land keeps me awake at night!
That should shame us for ever!

Ibn Zaydoun : Where is the king?
Where is that coward?
Shame cries in our blood:
Leave not your land undefended!
The land knows him who cares,
And him who sells her treasures.
The land can distinguish him who protects
From him who sullies her honour.
What shall we have to say
When tomorrow the prayers die
In our sad mosque?
Dare we admit we've sold the land
And violated our covenant?
The land belongs to the children
Arriving at the break of day.
Don't leave it to the little ones
A poisoned meal, or a dumb corpse
Swimming in blood!
The land does not belong
To a single generation
Who might violate its morning light,
Or sell what they would,
With no questions asked.
The next generations will call us to book,
And, in the darkness of our graves,
We shall hear them scream:
'You've left us nothing!
'You've left us nothing!'

BLACKOUT

SCENE X

(The king's palace. The king paces the stage in great dismay, with Walladah in tears)

King : Only my palace remains.
Only my palace.

Walladah : What did you say?

King : All Cordova's forts have fallen;
There's only my palace left.

Walladah : Where is the army?
Where are the men in their thousands,
Where are the mighty commanders of yore:
Tarek, Al-Waleed, and Uqbah?
Where is the sword of Allah?
Where is the sword of Muhammad?

King : Only my palace remains!

Walladah : We have lost all!

King : I have lost all,
I have nothing left!

Walladah : Where are all the faithful men?
Has all really been lost--the land,
The army, Islam, prayers, the past,
And the most sacred shrine—Cordova?

King : Lord of All being! Grant me long life
To let me mend my ways;
Grant me youth, and strength, and a sword,
So that I can be, once again,
The fighter I had been
For Allah's religion!
Oh, where is Abul-Waleed?
I need him now!
(Rabi enters, brandishing a sword, surrounded
By men driving Abul-Waleed in front).

Rabi : What do you need him for?
What I need now is your head,
Prince of the Faithful
And defender of Islam!
My army has surrounded Cordova
And only you are left!
(Rabi hurls Ibn Zaydoun on the floor, at Wallada's feet)

And here's your beloved,
Princess of Cordova,
Here is your lover,
Brought in to be killed
In front of you!

Walladah : No, oh no! Abul-Waleed will not die!
You cannot kill him!

Ibn Zaydoun : You cannot kill a dream,
For times will change and the dream,
Though the dreamer be dead,
Will float in the streets,
Alive in all living things,
In men and in the trees!
You cannot kill a voice,
For a time will come
When the silent will speak
With sounds overwhelming;
You may sever my head,
But my words will for ever live!

Rabi : *(to his men)*
Now! Do it now!
(Abdoun stabs Ibn Zaydoun)

Ibn Zaydoun : *(dying)*
Oh, weave no dream
In the shadow of kings!
A dream is born
Among the people, in the streets;
A dream is sown
In our vast fields of wheat,
Or is engendered
By the factories humming,
With the children
In the meadows singing.
A dream is made by the people,

So make the man before the dream,
And make the hands that honour the sword!
Create a time of purity
Wherein words can be planted
And made to grow, fearlessly.
It is hardly a tragedy
That the swords have deceived us,
Bowing down, despicably,
Or that words have been sold,
Or bought, ignominiously;
Man is our real tragedy.

(dies)

Walladah : What shall I mourn in you--
Purity, the homeland or a lifetime?
What shall I mourn in you--
A noble heart, a friend or a beloved?
Let me mourn the passing away
Of a pure dream
Now utterly shattered!
(voices and chanting heard from outside)

Abu Ḥayyan : Our beloved is dead,
The dream is departed.

Walladah : Shall I mourn you
Or mourn a homeland
Thus torn apart?
Now all is lost,
Women and children and honour,
Victims of corruption!
Will no one save Islam?

Will no one save
This dying homeland?

Rabi : Cordova is now at my feet,
How long have we yearned for it!
How many years have we waited,
And each felt as long as a lifetime.
Our homeland is ours once again!

Walladah : Would you believe that this broker
Was in command of our army?
He sold weapons, glory and history,
But never knew what he sold!

Chorus : Oh, he knew all right,
And the people knew,
That what he sold
Was land and honour.

Walladah : Even in their graves,
People were sold!

Abu Hayyan : Our history was auctioned
In the streets of Cordova,
And so was our land,
A long time ago.

Walladah : For no apparent reason,
Our rulers sold their peoples!

Abu Hayyan : Oh, there is a reason:
Each wanted to be the leader!

Walladah : And the people?

Chorus : To hell with the people.

Walladah : Your armies, Tarek, now are defeated!

Abu Hayyan : *(directing his face to Mecca, the Qiblah, as in prayer)*
O Messenger of Allah!
My tears flow whenever I direct my face
Towards your exalted Qiblah;
The guilt I carry around my neck
Is unbearable: both power and land are lost!

Ziyad : Our rulers have bartered their land
For illigitimate wealth,
Shamelessly robbing their people.

Abu Hayyan : O Messenger of Allah!
I am crying today
When it is too late to cry!
What boots it if my tears flow,
Now that the people are beginning to go,
Deserting their glory and great homeland?

Walladah : The minarets of Islam are silent,
Lost in sad perplexity;
While the streets of Cordova
Are bleching the Frankish army;
The prayers in our minarets are silent.
Will no one cry:
Allah is Great?
Will that call die
On people's Lips?
No, Messenger of Allah!

(the following lines are said by both Walladah and Abu Hayyan, and repeated after them by the crowd)
"Allah is Great"
Will never be humbled!
"Allah is Great"
Will never be stifled!
"Allah is Great"
Will always reverberate!

CURTAIN

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